

US federal workers denounce firings, call for mass action: “I do advocate for a general strike”

A. Woodsen, Robert Milkowski, David Benson, David Levine
18 February 2025

On Monday, protests were held across the United States in opposition to illegal firings of thousands of federal workers by President Donald Trump and Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE). Thousands of workers, students and supporters participated in the peaceful protests.

In downtown San Jose, California, around 1,500 protesters assembled at Circle of Palms Plaza to oppose the dictatorial agenda of the Trump administration. The San Jose demonstration was organized by Democratic Party-aligned 50501 Movement and the Bernie Sanders-affiliated Political Revolution. In line with their reformist politics, speakers denounced Trump's fascist policies but remained silent as to the role of the Democratic Party in facilitating the attacks.

Protesters carried signs and chanted slogans demanding the removal of both Trump and Musk from government and in support of immigrant and transgender rights.

Those who attended the demonstration were keenly aware of the dangers posed by the Trump/Musk attacks on federal workers. One told the WSWS, “The only thing to believe when they terminate probationary federal workers is that they are coming for everyone else.”

A US Geological Survey (USGS) worker said, “The OPM [Office of Personnel Management] is hijacked by Musk. They are forcing the agencies' directors to lay off people without a prior warning. Everyone, even our leaders, are scared and uninformed of what is going on.”

Signs highlighted the danger posed by the Trump administration, with one reading, “Hitler dismantled democracy in 53 days. Musk & Trump have had 28 days.” Others read, “This Fascist is not my President” and “Wake up America, this is a COUP!!!”

The WSWS reporters were warmly received by protesters, rapidly distributing 300 leaflets.

In sharp contrast to the humane and class-conscious sentiments

of many protesters, the organizers of the protest sought to promote backwardness and American nationalism. This was perhaps most apparent through the mass distribution by protest organizers of American flags.

The protest organizers also promoted the trade union bureaucracies, calling for non-unionized protesters to start unions. The trade unions have refused to call a single worker out on strike despite illegal mass firings of unionized federal workers. The nationalist trade unions support Trump's trade war agenda, which pits the working class against each other in a race to the bottom.

There was a contingent of workers from the USGS, which has recently undergone a mass DOGE-led purging. One worker told the WSWS:

I am an illegally terminated federal worker. I was working previously with the United States Geological Survey, helping the country deal with their critical minerals and resources within the country. So any propaganda from here from the administration with regards to wanting to focus on critical minerals, well, they just fired the people working on those things.

I haven't been in the federal service long enough to have a formal performance review, yet they cited performance as the reason for my illegal termination. So, the only thing left to believe is that if they can illegally terminate all their probationary employees is that they are coming for everybody else.

The illegality is smelling to high heaven here, and frankly, I'm not going to stand for it, and anybody in my agency who was terminated is out here supporting this event. And we're going to move on forward but with activism and resistance and boycotting the goods that they're trying to shove down our throats.

The worker explained:

The union has so far filed several class actions, and some of them have resulted in injunctions stopping what they've wanted to go through the pipe. However, as soon as the deferred resignation injunction was out the door, these illegal mass firings began.

Now we are left in limbo of not being able to return to our jobs while it filters its way through the court system. And as Musk has already said, any judge that simply follows the rule of law in this case is an illegal activist judge. I don't have very much hope if Elon gets his hand on the legal system, let alone everybody's financial records.

The worker concluded, "I do advocate for a general strike across the whole government."

One of the larger rallies on Monday was the "No to Kings" rally held in New York City, New York. Reporters for the WSWS attended and spoke to several protesters.

A marcher at the rally, which numbered over 1,000, told the WSWS the solution to Trump's push for dictatorship was "the same thing I would have told you when my generation was protesting against the Vietnam War—We need a general strike. That's what Rosa Luxemburg would have said, too!"

Two poets at the rally, Jessica and Holly, condemned the Democratic Party for aiding Trump. "The two-party system is failing everyone!" Jessica said. "It's all a lie. They're both on the same side—just two different names!" Holly added.

Both said they did not support either the Democratic or Republican Party due to their unstinting support for the genocide in Gaza. "I couldn't go out for months; I was so upset about the genocide. It was horrible seeing all those images on social media."

A medical student from Brooklyn said she came to the rally because of:

[W]hat is happening to medical and healthcare. There are people making decisions who have no real concern or understanding of healthcare. The legislators don't care about a woman's right to an abortion. They are tying the hands of health agencies to deliver correct, scientific information to us that we can pass on to the public.

There is also a real concern that the government will pass a national abortion ban. I don't have any confidence that the legislators won't pass this nationally. There is also concern with tying the hands of doctors to provide gender-affirming treatment to trans youth in the hospitals here in New York City. There has been friction over the treatment of trans youth with Langone Hospital at NYU being one of the first to drop the gender-affirming care. ... Stopping this care will

undoubtedly destabilize lives and bring on depression in the lives of these transgender people.

Amy, a terminated USAID (US Agency for International Development) contractor, explained that despite the fact there are currently "three court cases to save the jobs and contractors at USAID" and the "courts have all ruled in favor of us so far ... it hasn't made any difference. Trump and Musk are still canceling contracts, and now it is at a more rapid rate."

Amy said:

My contract was one for \$40 million to help build up educational programs around the world. We work in sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, South America and all over the world. They have cut or canceled most educational contracts. This means students where we work will not have books to study with. We do teacher training, and that is being shut down. We work with the local government to strengthen their educational programs. That will be halted. Fifty thousand people around the world will lose their jobs.

Amy concluded, "I believe the working class has to play a major role in this struggle. I think that there should be more mass demonstrations and strikes organized to stop this."

Ian Hubbard, an actor and recent graduate from Sarah Lawrence College, told WSWS reporters, "I completely agree with Leon Trotsky. He was my favorite historical figure when I was in high school.

"It is absolutely essential that the working class be mobilized to stop this. It is a radical idea now. It will get less radical."



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:
wsws.org/contact